

The Gnatcatcher

Newsletter of Juniata Valley Audubon

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as a benefit for members of the...

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY



President's Message

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-Laura Jackson

I had not been to Florida for 33 years, so I was excited to visit the Sunshine state in early October. As I flew over the Orlando area, I was surprised to see so much water. The landscape was dominated by wetlands and lakes, development, and small pockets of woodlands. Of course, more water was on its way - Hurricane Matthew was gaining strength and heading toward Florida. That gave an edge to the trip that I really didn't like, but there I was, ready for a conservation adventure.

I was invited to attend the 9th Annual Private Lands Partners Day, held in Sebring, Florida. The Partners for Conservation (PFC) encourages conservation on private lands by collaborating with landowners, federal agencies like the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and conservation organizations like Audubon, National Wildlife Federation, and many others. The PFC brings people of diverse backgrounds to the table to develop conservation action plans for species of concern. I was invited because of the habitat work accomplished on our property to benefit Golden-winged Warblers.

I was surprised to meet cattle ranchers and cowboys at the conference. I had no idea that Florida's cattle industry is one of the largest in the United States. What was even more surprising is what I saw when we spent a whole day touring several cattle ranches:

- Vast expanses of undeveloped, open land - tens of thousands of acres
- Water-holding practices - to keep water on the land so it can flow more slowly to the Everglades. These ranches sit at the headwaters of the Everglades.
- Swaths of forests full of native trees, ferns, and palmettos
- Huge flocks of birds - Wood Storks, Glossy and White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbills, Sandhill Cranes, Egrets, Wild turkeys - I was in birder's paradise!

One ranching family keeps 40 percent of its land undeveloped, even though there are intense development pressures on these ranchers. Thank goodness many of them have a strong stewardship ethic to conserve the natural resources and many have put their ranches in conservation easements. A conservation easement allows the family to retain ownership of the ranch, but it can't be developed. This preserves the land, the wildlife, and Florida's history.

These huge ranches were astounding and much different from the farms and woodlots that we have in Pennsylvania, but we did share a love of the land and a desire to protect it from development. If you own undeveloped property, I encourage you to consider getting a conservation easement. We have donated an easement on our property to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. We want our forest to continue as an important habitat for birds and other wildlife. I had to leave Florida a day early, thanks to Hurricane Matthew, but I won't wait 33 years before I go back - with bird book and binoculars in hand.

The Juniata Valley Audubon Society (JVAS) is a chapter of the National Audubon Society and is dedicated to the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity. Juniata Valley Audubon accomplishes its mission through advocacy, science, land stewardship, and education - working directly with Audubon Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania state office of the National Audubon Society.

The JVAS is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit, educational organization as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Gifts are deductible for income tax purposes (Tax ID # 25-1533496).

OFFICERS

President, Laura Jackson

- ♦ 814-652-9268
- ♦ mljackson2@embargmail.com

Vice President, Mark Bonta

- ♦ 610-348-3282
- ♦ mab86@psu.edu

Secretary, Sharon Clewell

- ♦ 814-207-5387
- ♦ sclewellp@hotmail.com

Treasurer, George Mahon

- ♦ 814-942-2658
- ♦ gsm815@hotmail.com

Immediate Past President, Dave Bonta

- ♦ 814-686-7274
- ♦ bontasaurus@yahoo.com

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Membership Committee, Charlie Hoyer

- ♦ 814-684-7376
- ♦ charma77@verizon.net

Conservation Committee, Vacant

- ♦
- ♦

Education Committee, Mark Bonta

- ♦ 610-348-3282
- ♦ mab86@psu.edu

Field Trips Committee, Kristin Joivell

- ♦ 814-386-6267
- ♦ kristinjean@hotmail.com

Programs Committee, Mark Bonta

- ♦ 610-348-3282
- ♦ mab86@psu.edu

Publications & Publicity Comm., Dave Bonta

- ♦ 814-686-7274
- ♦ bontasaurus@yahoo.com

Hospitality Committee, Marcia Bonta

- ♦ 814-684-3113
- ♦ marciabonta@hotmail.com

Historian, Mike Jackson

- ♦ 814-652-9268
- ♦ mljackson2@embargmail.com

Website Administrator, Dave Bonta

- ♦ 814-686-7274
- ♦ bontasaurus@yahoo.com

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

Warren Baker

- ♦ 814-695-0780

JVAS Members Honored as Chesapeake Forest Champions

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the US Forest Service presented the 2016 Chesapeake Forest Champions awards at the 11th Annual Chesapeake Watershed Forum attended by over 420 people from various local organizations. This year's honorees included Dr. Jim Finley of Penn State's Center for Private Forests who received the Forest Champion Lifetime Achievement Award, and Mike and Laura Jackson as "Exemplary Forest Stewards."

Dr. Jim Finley, professor and extension forester from Pennsylvania State University, received the Lifetime Achievement Award for his long-time championship for both forests and private forest landowners. Among his accomplishments, Dr. Finley led an educational initiative that led to the

formation of twenty-five local, independent and active woodland owner associations across Pennsylvania. He also developed the Pennsylvania Forest Stewards program and currently heads Penn State's new Center for Private Forests: "Connecting People – Sustaining

Forests," an ambitious effort to increase support for private forest landowners.



Mike and Laura Jackson are recognized as Exemplary Forest Stewards

goal was to leave the land better than they received it. Since acquiring the land they have worked to reintroduce native vegetation, control the spread of invasive plants and restore habitat for wildlife especially early successional species like the golden wing warbler and American woodcock. They also host woodland tours and share their experience with other woodland owners in the region.



Jim Finley is honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award

Pennsylvania landowners Mike and Laura Jackson were recognized as Exemplary Forest Stewards. The couple acquired 113 acres of farm and forestland in Bedford County, Pennsylvania. Their

Are You the Next JVAS Field Trip Coordinator?



Field trips with JVAS extend over a variety of topics from birds to trees to mushrooms. It's one of the things that makes JVAS unique—the club explores nature actively in addition to helping to protect and conserve it.

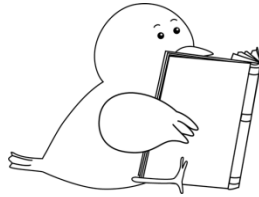
Kristin Joivell, current field trip coordinator for JVAS, is planning on “retiring” from the position after two years of service. The position will be opening in Spring 2017 with the new person to begin coordinating field trips for Fall 2017.

Maybe you are thinking about being the next field trip coordinator! But, what exactly does a field trip coordinator do? There are four main responsibilities in the position, most of which (of course) center around organizing and promoting trips for JVAS members to attend.

- Generate field trip topics.
- Create field trip lists and brochures.
- Contact people and organizations to schedule field trips.
- Promote field trips on Facebook and our JVAS List Serve E-Mail.



Off The Shelf



We hope Off The Shelf; will appear in every issue of The Gnatcatcher, but that will only happen if you send in your reviews of natural history books. We also welcome feedback. Email Laura Jackson to contribute a book review, or if you have a comment about a book that was reviewed. Please note that contributions for the next newsletter should be sent to Laura by December 10, 2016. Good reading!

COYOTE AMERICA by Dan Flores

Review by Marcia Bonta

If you, like me, are a fan of coyotes, this book will both delight and sicken you. Subtitled A Natural and Supernatural History, Flores covers every aspect of coyotes' lives, present and past, the Native American fables and stories that feature Coyote, and the western settlers as well as present day Americans' approach to these amazing and resilient creatures.

Their story begins in the American Southwest 3.2 million years ago when coyotes split from gray wolves. While wolves crossed into Asia and Europe, coyotes remained here and eventually became the heroes of Indian folk tales.

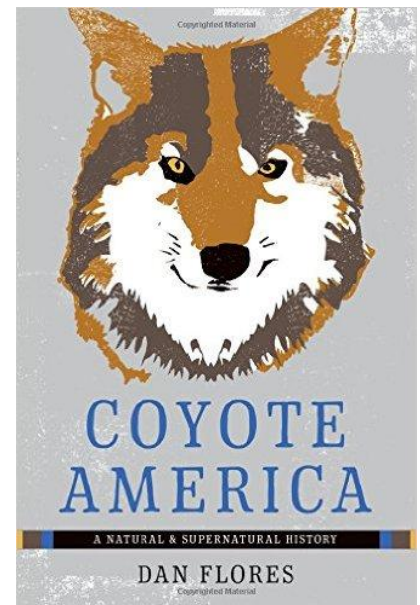
Early American explorers called them "prairie wolves" and seemed to admire them. But the farmers, ranchers, and hunters of the late nineteenth century demonized them along with larger predators such as wolves.

Our "Hundred Years War," as Flores calls it, against these animals, has been subsidized by taxpayers beginning in the early twentieth century up to the present day. Unlike wolves, which are pack animals and were easy to kill with poison bait, coyotes are known for what scientists call their "fission-fusion" adaptations in which they can be either pack or solitary animals, depending on outside pressures and are not as easily drawn into bait.

Despite killing more than six and a half million coyotes from 1945 to 1971, the Animal Control Board, renamed the Division of Wildlife Services in 1997, under the Department of Agriculture, has continued their war against coyotes, most recently killing 512,710 coyotes from 2006 to 2011. But coyotes can adjust their population, having as many as 20 pups if they are persecuted or as few as two if they are not.

They also began their incredible expansion to the East and as far north as Anchorage, Alaska and lately have discovered the safest places to live are cities where they are not hunted and there is plenty of food. So while a coyote requires 10 square miles of territory in the country, it only needs 3 square miles in a city.

Flores covers the many human heroes in Coyote America as well as the villains. Mammologists such as Olaus and Adolph Murie, who studied coyotes in Jackson Hole, Wyoming and Yellowstone back in the 1930s. Olaus concluded that coyotes were not arch predators of game animals but omnivorous generalists that mostly ate mice, gophers, and hares and that only fed on elk carcasses. Adolph agreed and added grasshoppers and crickets to their diet as well as the weakest mule deer fawns and antelopes. But coyotes are opportunists and in the cities they not only prey on the occasional pet, especially cats, but they also eat the eggs and young of Canada geese and white-tailed deer fawns.



Off the shelf continued...

Still, despite the championing by informed mammologists, the killing continued unabated. It took an unlikely person, namely Walt Disney, to begin a sympathetic portrayal of coyotes that reached the general public. In 1961 Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color ran a six-part series entitled "The Coyote's Lament." At the time federal poisoners, bounty hunters and state trappers were killing between 250,000 and 300,000 coyotes a year. Disney ended his series with, "When the time comes when you can't hear the song of the coyote, the West is going to seem a mighty dull place."

Since then more and more people are opposed to the war on coyotes. Still, that war has brought bigger coyotes to the East. Scientists now claim, based on genetic studies that coyote hybridization with gray wolves began 550 to 950 years ago in the Great Lakes region and have resulted in as much as 20% wolf genes in Great Lakes' coyotes and 40% in Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park. They also claim that the South's red wolves are a hybrid of southern gray wolves and coyotes that began 290 to 430 years ago.

And so the coyote, fact and legend, has become larger than life. As we know here in Pennsylvania our so-called eastern coyotes are bigger than those of the West. They continue to evolve and adapt to us and our ways. For instance, studies of urban coyotes find that fewer and fewer are killed by cars every year.

But, as Flores wonders, will we adapt to them, stop killing them and allow their populations to stabilize?

*Not on Facebook? Join the JVAS Listserv for timely updates:



To subscribe, send an e-mail message to JVAS-L-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu with **SUBSCRIBE** in the subject line.

After you have been added to the JVAS-L mailing list, you can send a message to JVAS-@lists.psu.edu ...which will be routed to all of the people currently subscribed to the list.

You can unsubscribe from the list at any time by sending an email to JVAS-L-signoff-request@lists.psu.edu ...with **UNSUBSCRIBE** in the subject line.





Calling All Christmas Bird Counters!

The JVAS Blair County Christmas Bird Count (CBC), centered around Culp, will be held on **Saturday, December 17**, with a tally dinner (aka “tally rally”) to be held at the Bellwood-Antis Library (526 Main St., Bellwood, PA), starting at 5 P.M. The potluck dinner is open to all, so you can attend even if you can’t help with the CBC.

Please contact Hospitality Chair Marcia Bonta to let her know that you will attend the Christmas Bird Count Tally Dinner and what you plan to bring: 814-684-3113.

We hope YOU will be a counter this year! We are always in need of more participants, so check with birder friends and invite them to participate, too. Participation is free. In addition to field surveys, we need feeder watchers. If you live in the count circle (within 7.5 miles of Culp), you are encouraged to record the birds you see on your property or at your feeder.

Counters will be assigned a section of the circle to cover, so if you have a favorite area, be sure to sign up early. Register by calling Laura at 814-652-9268 or email mljackson2@embarqmail.com. You will receive a map showing which part of the circle to cover, a species checklist, and pointers on any bird hot spots that might be in your part of the circle. We will assign the count areas in early December, so if you have a favorite area that you want to cover, contact Laura before December 10.

Also, we hope you will attend the Saturday, Nov. 12 Pre-CBC Workshop to help us organize the event. We’ll meet at the Bellwood-Antis Library from 1 - 4 PM.

There are 3 other Christmas Bird Counts in our area that need participants:

Huntingdon Co. CBC is centered around Donation, PA.

Contact compiler Deb Grove: 814-643-3295 or dsg4@psu.edu

Bedford Co. CBC on December 31, is centered around Manns Choice, PA.

Contact compilers Mike and Laura Jackson: 814-652-9268 or mljackson2@embarqmail.com

Raystown CBC: Contact compiler Greg Grove for more details: gwg2@psu.edu

Please Welcome our new JVAS INTERN: Jacob Vaughn

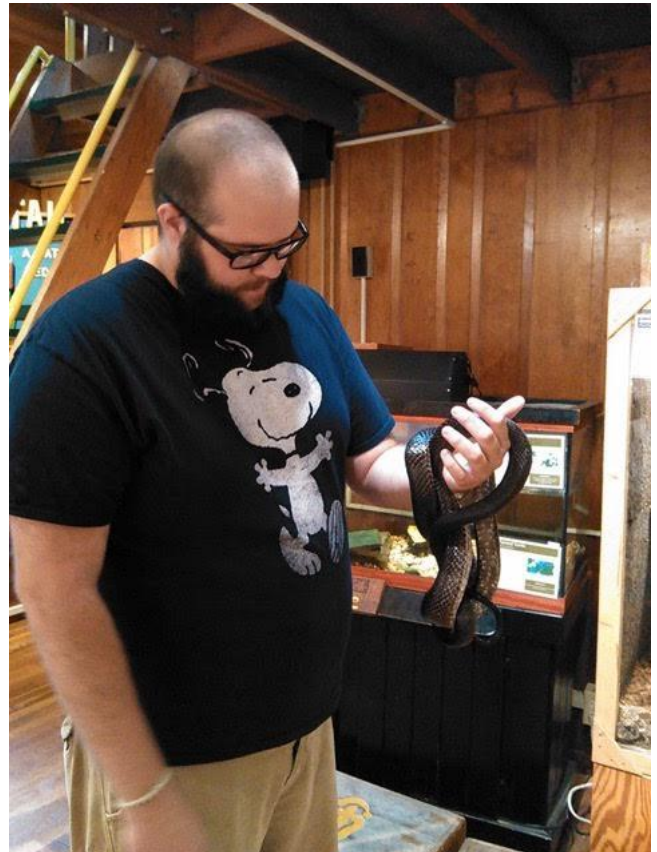
Jake is a senior at Penn State Altoona campus and is majoring in Environmental Studies. His internship mentor is Mark Bonta, JVAS Vice-President and Assistant Professor of Earth Science at Penn State Altoona.

Jake shared this with us:

“Growing up, I spent a lot of time with my grandparents, who always had me doing things outdoors. In the summer, I would go fishing with my grandparents. In the fall and winter, I hunted deer and small game with my grandfather. Spending so much time in nature gave me a love for wildlife, especially reptiles and birds. As a child, I enjoyed watching birds with my grandmother just as much as I enjoyed hunting and fishing.

Currently, my hobbies include hunting, fishing, caring for my pet reptiles, and making music. My goals for this internship are to learn about what JVAS has accomplished in the past, as well as to learn about how environmental NGOs function. I am also working with Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center on a public outreach project in the name of JVAS that involves promoting education and conservation of Pennsylvania’s native snakes. This fall, I will be going to a total of three local schools to teach the students about the benefits of having snakes in our ecosystems.”

In addition to outreach programs at local schools, Jake is also busy digitizing JVAS newsletters - which is a huge help to JVAS Historian, Mike Jackson. Jake will also videotape JVAS past-presidents, as part of an oral history project that will be shared when JVAS celebrates its 50th Anniversary in 2016.



Jake Vaughn, Intern for JVAS, is holding a black rat snake - one of several that he will be taking to classrooms, so students can learn more about our native snakes.

Wanted to Scan: Old Gnatcatchers from 1969 through 1994!

It’s time to clean out the attic and dust off your old Gnatcatchers! JVAS Historian, Mike Jackson, is organizing the newsletters that have been “handed down” from past generations of JVAS historians and members.

Intern Jake Vaughn is scanning past Gnatcatchers, so they can be made available on the JVAS.org website as digital copies for everyone to enjoy and reminisce about the “good old times”. Mike doesn't have any copies of “The Gnatcatchers” from the following years: **1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1986, 1990, 1992, and 1993.**

If you have any copies of “The Gnatcatcher” that you would be willing to donate or allow Mike to scan, please notify him at: mljackson2@embarqmail.com, call him at 814-652-9268, or bring the copies to a JVAS meeting. Any Gnatcatchers that you loan to Mike will be returned safely to you after the scanning is completed.

JVAS November Workshop and Program

Our programs and workshops are designed for a general audience, and are free and open to the public.

We meet in the Bellwood-Antis Library at 526 Main Street, Bellwood, PA.

Directions: Take Interstate I-99 to the Bellwood/Route 865 Exit (Exit 41). Follow Rt. 865 through the Sheetz/Martin's intersection. Proceed about 4 blocks and turn right at the "Business District" sign, just before the railroad overpass. Turn left at the dead end and travel to the stop sign. Continue straight for a short distance; the library will be on your right.

Saturday, November 12, 2016 from 1PM to 4 PM

Pre-Christmas Bird Count Workshop

We will get organized for the Annual Christmas Bird Count scheduled for December 17 and will review winter bird identification. Contact Mike and Laura Jackson, coordinators for the Christmas Bird Count, if you have questions. Email: mljackson2@embarqmail.com or call (814) 652-9268.



Tuesday, November 15, 2016 from 7PM - 8:30 PM

Bluebirds in a Noisy World



Danielle Williams, graduate student at Penn State University under Dr. Margaret Brittingham, will discuss her master's research about how noise from natural gas compressor stations affects Eastern Bluebird reproduction. She will explain the pilot study she conducted in the summer of 2016 and her plans for expanding the project in 2017. She will also go over how feeding rates, incubation rates, and other parameters might be impacted and what that could mean for bluebirds and other species.

Upcoming 2016 Field Trips

Saturday, Nov. 5, 2016 from 2pm to 5pm Staff Sergeant Francis Campion Memorial Hike

This hike honors Staff Sergeant Frank Campion, a JVAS member, who died in a military training accident in 2011. Meet at 2:00 PM at Penn State Altoona's Seminar Forest for a 3-mile stroll through the fall woods. Meet at the Seminar Forest Trailhead by heading up Juniata Gap Road toward the Penn State Altoona campus. Then take the left turn onto Becker's Lane just before the main entrance to Penn State Altoona on the right. There is limited parking in the grassy area to the left of the small cabin and fire ring at the trailhead. Contact field trip leader, Kristin Joivell, with any questions you may have at (814)386-6267.

Friday, November 25, 2016 from 1pm to 5pm Post Thanksgiving Hike on the Lower Trail

Shed those turkey and pumpkin pie pounds while enjoying an easy, five-mile hike from Mount Etna to Alfarata on the Lower Trail. Meet in the Alfarata Station Trailhead parking lot at 1:00 PM. We'll carpool from Alfarata to the Mount Etna Trailhead and then hike on this rail trail along the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River back to Alfarata. Contact field trip leader, Kristin Joivell, with any questions you may have at (814)386-6267.

Saturday, December 31, 2016 Bedford County Christmas Bird Count and Tally Dinner

Contact Coordinators Mike and Laura Jackson if you would like to participate. Email mljackson2@embarqmail.com or call 814-652-9268.

December 31, 2016 from 11am to 1:30pm Peace Chapel Trails in Huntingdon

Last Day Resolution Hike Make your New Year's Resolutions early at the Peace Chapel Trails in Huntingdon as we leisurely hike approximately 3 to 4 miles together on the last day of 2016. Meet at the trail head on Peace Chapel Road in Huntingdon at 11am. Bring a snack and drink for the hike, we will visit the nearby Standing Stone Coffee Company just before they shut down for 2016 for hot chocolate (or whatever else you would like to prepare for the New Year) after the hike!

Check out their menu on their website at <http://www.standingstonecoffeecompany.com/> for more details. Contact field trip leader, Kristin Joivell, with any questions you may have at (814)386-6267.

Check our JVAS Facebook Page on a regular basis for other trips and activities!!!

JUNIATA VALLEY AUDUBON

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Like Café Lenca at www.facebook.com/CafeLenca

Café Lenca Coffee will be sold at JVAS Meetings: 1 lb. bags are \$12 and 2 lb. bags are \$22. The roasted coffee is available as whole bean or ground.